

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 21182

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, EFIN, TH

SUBJECT: FIRST DAY OF THE BUDGET DEBATE; THAWIT MUZZLED

REF: A) BANGKOK 20539 291253ZSEPT75

B) BANGKOK 18604 041108ZSEPT75

SUMMARY: THE PARLIAMENT CONSIDERED AND PASSED ONLY FOUR OF THE 26 ARTICLES OF THE BUDGET BILL DURING THE FIRST DAY OF THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL. THE OPPOSITION IS FOCUSING ITS ATTACK ON THE TAMBON IMPROVEMENT BILL, FREE BUS RIDE SERVICE, FREE MEDICAL CARE AND THE SECRET FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THE MILITARY. MANY PARLIAMENTARIANS EXPECT THE BILL TO PASS. THAWIT KLINPRATHUM'S THREAT TO PULL THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY OUT OF THE COALITION UNLESS THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE RESIGNED OR WAS OUSTED CAME TO NAUGHT. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY HAVE ASKED HIM NOT TO MAKE UNAUTHORIZED STATEMENTS WITHOUT PRIOR PARTY APPROVAL. END SUMMARY

1. NOTHING OF GREAT MOMENT OCCURRED DURING THE FIRST
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FULL DAY OF DEBATE ON THE BUDGET BILL OCTOBER 6. IN

A SESSION THAT ENDED AT FIVE MINUTES PAST MIDNIGHT ONLY
FOUR OF THE 26 ARTICLES HAD BEEN VOTED ON. THE GOVERNMENT
WON EACH VOTE BY A SAFE MARGIN.

2. THE ONLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE CONSIDERED WAS THE
720 MILLION BAHT ALLOCATED FOR THE INTERNAL SECURITY
OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC). THE OPPOSITION ATTACKED
ISOC AS BEING A FAILURE, A MEANS TO SUPPRESS THE PEOPLE
AND AN UNNECESSARY WASTE OF TAXPAYERS' MONEY. THE
GOVERNMENT AGREED THAT THE BEST WAY TO COMBAT INSURGENCY
WAS THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. FINANCE MINISTER
BUNCHU ROCHANASATHIAN TOLD THE HOUSE HE WOULD REDUCE
THE BUDGET FOR ISOC DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS, BUT IN THE
MEANTIME THE PEOPLE STILL NEEDED PROTECTION FROM COMMUNIST
TERRORISTS. THE ARTICLE PASSED BY 128 TO 94 VOTES.

3. THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTIES -- THE DEMOCRATS, SOCIALISTS,
SOCIALIST UNITED FRONT AND THE NEW FORCE -- PUBLICLY
STATED THE: OPPOSITION TO THE BILL UNLESS CERTAIN ITEMS
WERE AMENDED. THEY HAVE TARGETED THE TAMBON IMPROVEMENT
BILL, FREE BUS RIDE SERVICE, FREE MEDICAL CARE AND THE
SECRET FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THE MILITARY AS THE FOCUS OF
ATTACK. THE DEMOCRATS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE PROPOSED THAT
THE TAMBON IMPROVEMENT BILL BE REDUCED BY ONE BILLION
BAHT WITH THAT SUM USED TO SUBSIDIZE LAND REFORM. THEY
ALSO PROPOSE THAT THE 508 MILLION BAHT ALLOCATED FOR
FREE BUS RIDE SERVICE BE ELIMINATED ALTOGETHER FROM THE
BILL SINCE IT BENEFITS ONLY PEOPLE IN THE METROPOLITAN
AREAS NOT THE RURAL COUNTRYSIDE AND BECAUSE IT BENEFITS
BUS COMPANY OWNERS MORE THAN THE RIDERS.

4. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY'S POLITICAL ASSISTANT, AFTER
TALKS WITH SEVERAL PARLIAMENTARIANS, BOTH GOVERNMENT
AND OPPOSITION, REPORTED THAT THEY ALL EXPECT THE BUDGET
TO PASS WITH LITTLE DIFFICULTY. THE OPPOSITION'S SOUND
AND FURY IS MOSTLY FOR CONSUMPTION BACK HOME. THE
PARTIES THAT SUPPORT EH GOVERNMENT ARE HELD IN CHECK BY
KHUKRIT'S TRUMP CARD, HIS THREAT TO DISSOLVE THE
PARLIAMENT AND CALL ELECTIONS THAT NOBODY REALLY WANTS.
END COMMENT.

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5. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY LEADER THAWIT KLINPRATHUM'S
THREAT THAT THE SJP WOULD PULL OUT OF THE COALITION UNLESS
MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRAMAN ADIREKSAN RESIGNED OR WAS
OUTSTED FROM HIS POST BY OCTOBER 2 (REF A) FIZZLED OUT
FOR LACK OF SUPPORT WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY. COMMERCE
MINISTER AND DEPUTY PARTY LEADER THONGYOT CHITTAWIRA
STATED PUBLICLY THAT THAWIT WAS SPEAKING PURELY ON HIS

OWN AND NOT AS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE SJP; THEREFORE, THE PARTY WOULD NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT THAWIT SAID CONCERNING THIS MATTER. THE NATION OF OCTOBER 7 REPORTS THAT A GROUP OF SJP MEMBERS STOPPED THAWIT FROM TALKING WITH THE PRESS AND ASKED HIM NOT TO MAKE FURTHER STATEMENTS THAT THE PARTY HAD NOT FIRST AGREED UPON. IT ALSO REPORTED THAT THAWIT SAID ON OCTOBER 6 THAT HE HAS NO PLANS TO BREAK UP THE COALITION AND WOULD MAKE NO MOVE TO ASK THE PRIME MINISTER TO RESHUFFLE THE CABINET AFTER THE BUDGET BILL PASSES.

6. COMMENT: THE NUMBER OF RUMORS THAT EITHER A CABINET RESHUFFLE OR THE FALL OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT WAS IMMINENT HAS DIMINISHED CONSIDERABLY. THE PRESENT ACCEPTED WISDOM IS THAT THE CABINET RESHUFFLE WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER PASSAGE OF THE BUDGET BILL AS KHUKRIT HAS LONG MAINTAINED (REF B).
MASTERS

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